

Mr. Weisberg,

This is the
LaFontaine's
response to the
Bochan article.

Debra

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The following is a response by Ray LaFontaine to the major points raised in Steve Bochan's attack on their book, "Oswald Talked".

(quote on)

1. To begin with, Bochan likes to make the point (together with Gerald Posner) that evidence "closest to the actual event" is most credible. Well, as it happens, we agree. As journalists, we give preference wherever possible to the earliest documents and interviews available. In the context of Silvia Odio's claims of having sighted a preassassination "Leon" Oswald in September 1963, there's not much question what these earliest materials are. One is the FBI report of Nov. 29, 1963 on Lucille Connell. Here Mrs. Connell tells the FBI, seven days after the assassination, that Silvia had known Oswald, had met him at more than one anti-Castro meeting, that he

was a double agent, etc. There's no reason to suppose Mrs. Connell OR THE FBI made up the information she provided. Moreover, Mrs. Connell's account to the bureau is corroborated virtually in its entirety by Silvia's psychiatrist Burton Einspruch in HIS earliest interview, contained in the Burt Griffin memo of April 1964.

2. Nonetheless, Bochan is unhappy with both of these "closest to the actual event" accounts (because, of course, they both reveal Silvia's lies). He prefers LATER interviews: by Gaeton Fonzi in the case of Mrs. Connell, and by HSCA attorneys in the case of Einspruch. The preferred interviews follow the earlier ones cited above by twelve years in one instance and fourteen in the other. As you have pointed out, Einspruch's HSCA interview (in 1978) is virtually worthless, not only because it occurs many years after his statement to Griffin, but because it was conducted with Silvia hanging on the line - to "assist him," presumably. The Griffin memo stands as Einspruch's only contemporaneous and independent (i.e., out of Silvia's presence) account.

3. The excuse Bochan provides for discarding the clear testimony of the Griffin memo is that Einspruch's words reach us INDIRECTLY, by way of Griffin, and that Griffin is not trustworthy. Having no support for the last ridiculous contention, Bochan attempts to use US to make his argument. He deliberately distorts our characterization of Griffin and Leon Hubert

(but again, what's new?) as being "out of the loop," a term we never used.

Though Griffin and Hubert were intentionally kept from the interview of Ruby, they were probably the most knowledgeable of any of the commission staffers when it came to actual investigation. Bochan's claim that we characterize them as "uninformed" or otherwise unreliable is a flat lie.

Beyond that, Mary contacted Einspruch in the spring of 1995 and faxed him the Griffin memo, asking that he review it and notify us of any inaccuracies. Einspruch made NO OBJECTIONS to the memo.

4. Oddly, though Bochan distrusts Griffin's memo for being an indirect summary of Einspruch's words, he appears positively entranced by the relevance of ANOTHER indirect summary - this one made in 1976, some thirteen years after the assassination, and emerging suddenly another nineteen years later, in 1995. No matter. THIS memo, made by later-to-be HSCA investigator Gaeton Fonzi following an interview with Mrs. Connell, has the right stuff. It "corrects" the words Mrs. Connell gave to the FBI just seven days following the assassination, namely that Silvia had told her she had known Oswald, had seen him at more than one anti-Castro meeting, etc., etc. According to the Bochan- approved Fonzi summation of 1976, Mrs. Connell could no longer remember details too clearly. In fact (she reportedly tells Fonzi), "As I recall Silvia herself didn't tell me that, it was her sister who told me that." Needless to say, Bochan seems to want

to give Fonzi's account credence over the rather terse (but explicit) FBI report of November 1964. There's a small problem with the second version, however - other than the obvious "thirteen years later" problem. To accept what Fonzi and Bochan are implying is to claim that the FBI made up Mrs. Connell's 1963 allegations about Silvia (the agents weren't too smart and made no notes, Mrs. Connell supposedly told Fonzi), and to contradict Silvia's own explanation of Mrs. Connell's revelations. The two versions aren't compatible. In his zeal to protect Silvia, Fonzi would have us believe the FBI painted a highly conspiratorial picture, one containing the claim that Oswald was a double agent (the single best kept secret of the FBI, and the last thing the bureau wanted revealed). Perhaps realizing that this account by Fonzi just doesn't fly, Bochan goes on to include Silvia's claim that Mrs. Connell made the report because she was jealous of Silvia (a claim Silvia repeated to Mary in 1995). Interestingly, despite Fonzi's implication, Silvia herself doesn't claim that the FBI made up the story - she knows better. Instead, when Hoover's agents showed back up in September 1964, she gave the old double-edged knife excuse: Lucille was jealous of me .. So which is it: Is Gaeton "misremembering," or is Silvia lying? It can't be both.

5. In March 1995, Mary interviewed Lucille Connell both on the record and with an irrefutable record of the conversation. Mary introduced herself as a journalist writing on the new evidence in the Kennedy assassination.

The conversation was lengthy, covered a wide range of questions, and - as endnote 43 of chapter 9 indicates - occurred prior to the emergence of Gaeton Fonzi's memo on the matter (see above). Bochan's rendition of Mrs. Connell's "whispered confidences" which Mary "betrayed" is hilarious; this guy's funnier than Laurel and Hardy, both - though not intentionally, of course. His only apparent intention, here as elsewhere, is to distort the book. (The word "confided" was never used in the context of Mrs. Connell, so he can't read either - or doesn't want to.) On the question of what Silvia told Mrs. Connell:

ML. Dr. Einspruch told the Warren Commission that Silvia had told him that she had met Lee Harvey Oswald several times [and] had seen him at several meetings. Is that what she told you?

Mrs. Connell. Yes, it is.

Mrs. Connell also volunteered that she had SPOKEN WITH SILVIA'S SISTER VERY INFREQUENTLY, AND NEVER MADE THE CLAIM THAT IT WAS THE SISTER WHO HAD TOLD HER ABOUT AN OSWALD ENCOUNTER. In short, Mrs. Connell is telling the same story today that she told the FBI more than thirty years ago.